



Idaho Commission on the Arts



Reporting Tip Sheets

Evaluation? Accountability? Data? Final reports?
Does this all sound like buzzwords and jargon? If so,
there may be a way to understand these important
concepts by looking at a field everyone knows about:
the “other” kind of reporting—journalism.

What can we learn from what journalistic reporters do every day, that can help us report the “news” of our programs to the Idaho Commission on the Arts and others? The following two *Reporting Tip Sheets* will help get you on your way.

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Tip Sheet 1: Reporting to Idaho Commission on the Arts

Tip Sheet 1 is designed to help you use the Idaho Commission on the Arts Final Report Form.

1. Get the Facts Straight

The first thing that reporters have to do is get the facts. This means making sure they have *enough* facts, to fully tell the story; *the right kind* of facts, that are relevant and pertinent; and *accurate* facts, as opposed to the other kind (which aren't facts at all).

For some *tools for collecting and reporting facts*, see the box to the right.

2. Tell the Story

A good news story isn't just a jumble of information. It is presented in a coherent fashion. Use a logical sequence of information to convey what your program accomplished. See the box below, for how to develop narratives.

Tools for Collecting and Reporting Facts

Facts are also known as *data*. Data include things like the following:

- The program served 150 students.
- 57% of program participants reported satisfaction with the program.
- 10,000 students saw the dance on tour program.
- Students experienced an average gain of 30 points on the writing test.
- A students served by the program avoided dropping out of school.

Kinds of Data

- **Demographic data.** Page 2 of the *Final Report Form* requests demographic data on numbers served, ethnicity, etc. This form goes directly to Grants Unit at the Commission.
- **Data on outcomes.** These data might include test scores or other numerical data on student achievement; averages or summaries of survey results; or qualitative data, such as extended interview responses or observations.

Narratives

The final report narrative section gives you the opportunity to "tell the story" of your program. You should use the narrative section to link to the data and to clarify any documentation that is included. Answer the following kinds of questions:

- Was your program implemented as you planned it?
- What were your program goals?
- Did your program meet its goals?
- How do you know whether your program met its goals?

3. Use Various Kinds of Information

Use numbers/statistics, testimony (sometimes called *anecdotal* information), consisting of people's narratives of what they witnessed, descriptions of events, etc.

4. Provide Documentation

A good newspaper article is enlivened by photos. The evening news becomes even more compelling with its video footage. Strengthen your reporting with this documentation, which might also include photocopied reproductions of student work, etc. See the box, below.

5. Interpret the News

Good journalists help their readers to understand the information they present. You can do this, too. Here are some ways:

- Explain background and context
- Highlight things that are unique or unusual
- Relate the significance

Now that you have completed the steps for reporting to the Idaho Commission on the Arts, turn to **Tip Sheet 2: Reporting to Others.**

Documentation

Documentation includes various kinds of media, artifacts, or evidence that support your beliefs that your program has made a difference or that it was implemented effectively. Examples might include:

- Quoted excerpts from surveys, interviews, letters of commendation, students' journals. In some cases these forms of documentation might also be thought of as data (see above).
- Video and photography. Make sure that these forms of documentation provide evidence, not just that your program activities took place, but that you met some of your objectives.
- Actual paper documents, such as curricula and lesson plans, meeting minutes, observation summaries.





Tip Sheet 2: Reporting to Others

Tip Sheet 2 is designed to help you meet the *Reporting to Other Audiences* expectation in the Idaho Commission on the Arts Final Report Form

1. Know Your Readers

A good newspaper writer knows readers and presents information appropriately. You can do this, also. At a minimum, you should do the following:

- Know their reading level and background information
- Gauge their interest
- Assess potential significance

One way to do this is to ask the following questions:

- What do readers want to know? (What will be interesting or exciting?)
- What do readers need to know? (What information will be useful to them?)
- What will readers be able to act on? (What information will provide them with tools to take action or advocate for your program?)

2. Consider the Impact

It is important to consider the possible impact of your information. Is it presented in a way that it will be compelling?

The following are examples of information that, if presented appropriately, might be compelling enough to bring about impacts:

- Sharing results internally (with staff and board) to make decisions for continuing or expanding the program; strategic planning; and grantsmanship
- Communicating to important constituents (partners, parents, clients) in order to publicize benefits of the program
- Reporting to current or potential funders to help them decide to initiate or to broaden support for the program
- Publicizing via professional or educational journals, conventions, organizations, etc., to expand the research base of effective practices

These are some examples of results and how they can be used. Can you think of other examples, perhaps from your own program?

3. Package Information Appropriately

Design your message for your audience.

- Length
- Format
- Level of expertise



4. Do Follow-Up Stories

Good newspapers follow up on important stories over time. You should also follow up. Check back with your readers periodically to ensure that they have the latest news.

5. Putting it all Together: Making a Plan

Develop a plan to guide your outside communications, including whom you will communicate to, what aspects of your program you will highlight, and when. Then use your plan to track your communications and report them to the Idaho Commission on the Arts.